Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination

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Objectives

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- **Definitions of Terms**
- **Psychological Theories of Prejudice/Discrimination**
  - **Evolutionary**
  - **Personality**
  - **Social Learning**
  - **Cognitive**
  - **Group Identity**
- **Occurrence of Prejudice/Discrimination**
- **Aversive Racism**
- **Reducing Prejudice/Discrimination**

Definition of Terms

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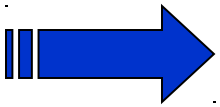
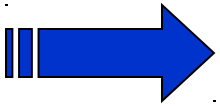
- **Prejudice: A hostile or negative attitude toward a distinguishable group of people, based only on their membership in that group**



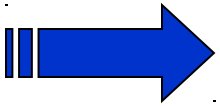
FEELING

- **Stereotypes: Beliefs and expectations about the typical characteristics (usually traits of group members)**



THINKING

- **Discrimination: Unjustified negative or harmful action toward a member of a group, simply because of his or her membership in that group**



BEHAVING

Evolutionary Psychology Perspective

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- **Prejudice occurs out of need to protect access to limited resources**

  Group members restrict access to resources out of need to maintain the group; to survive

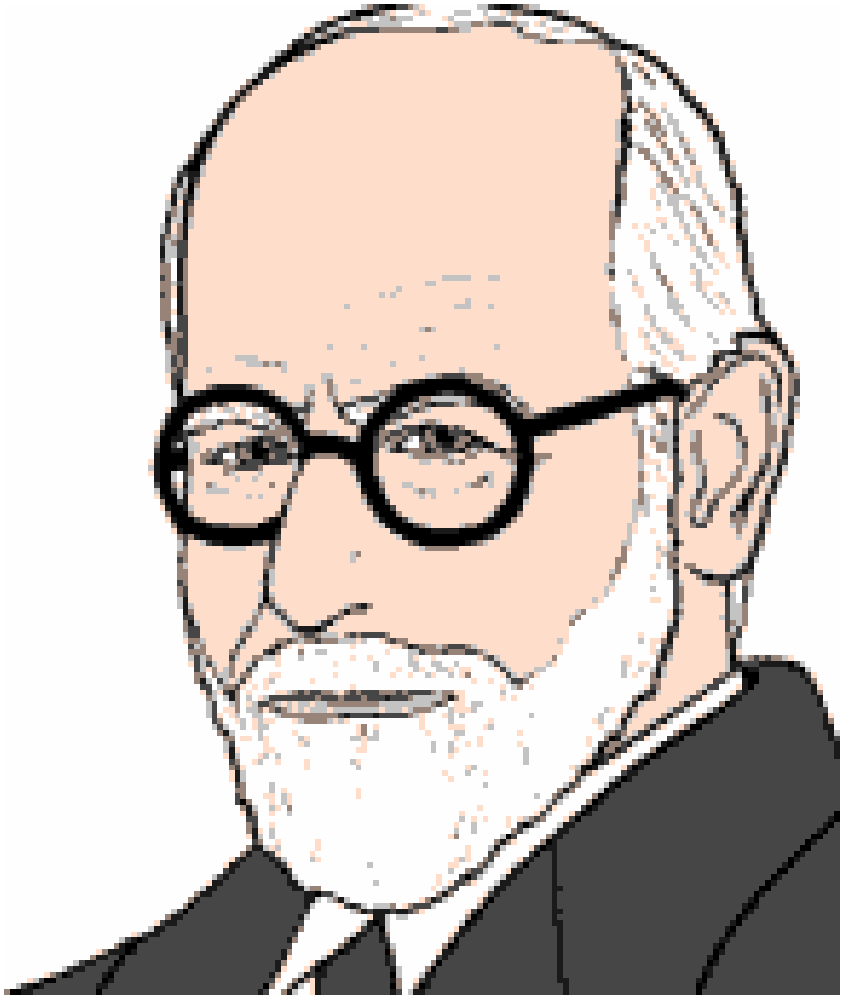
- **Realistic Conflict Theory**

  Competition among groups for valued or limited resources (land, jobs, housing) results in prejudice and discrimination

  Current examples of this perspective?

Personality Approach

- **Prejudice and discrimination were symptoms of a disordered, "prejudiced personality"**
  - **Prejudice was a sign of psychological problems**
- **Rooted in Freudian thinking**
  - **Unfulfilled needs cause members of one group to be biased against another**
- **Focus on the abnormal made it apply to limited segment of population**
  - **those that had certain personality characteristics (e.g., intolerant, authoritarian)**



Social Learning Approach

- **Social Learning Theory (Bandura)**
  - **Prejudice and discrimination are learned**
  - **Children learn to discriminate by observing and modeling these behaviors in others (e.g., parents, teachers, friends)**
    - **Especially when these negative behaviors are rewarded**
- **Media portrayals may influence development of prejudice in children**
  - **TV shows**
  - **Movies**
  - **Cartoons**

Cognitive Approach: Categorization

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- Attention is limited
- Too much information

  Must be selectively categorized/organized so people can function more efficiently

- Selective organization helps us function

  Also leads to formation of prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination

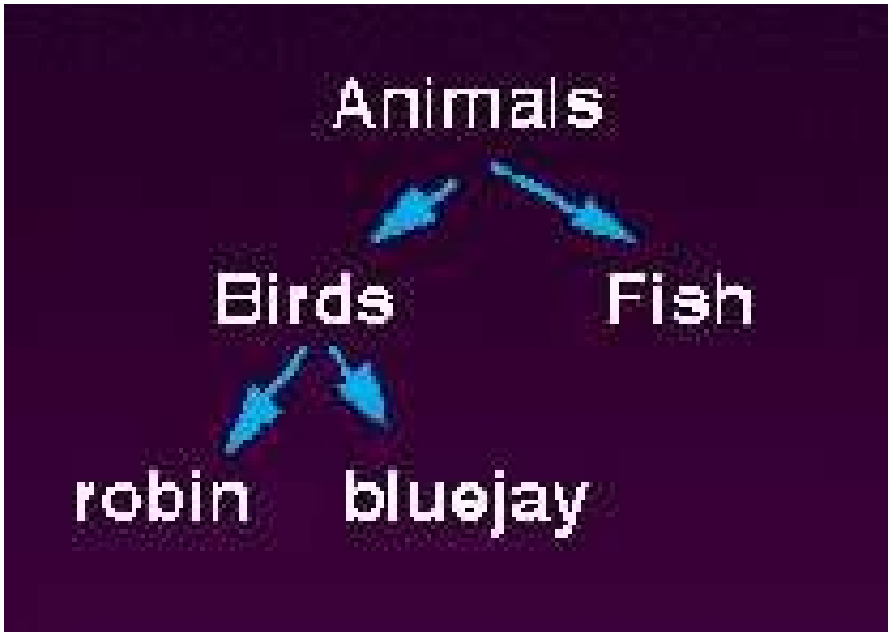
- We organize/simplify the world by forming categories; often about things to which we belong

Benefits of Categorization

- **Help us deal with "information overload"**
- **Allow us to identify people and distinguish among them**
- **Make estimates about possible characteristics rapidly**

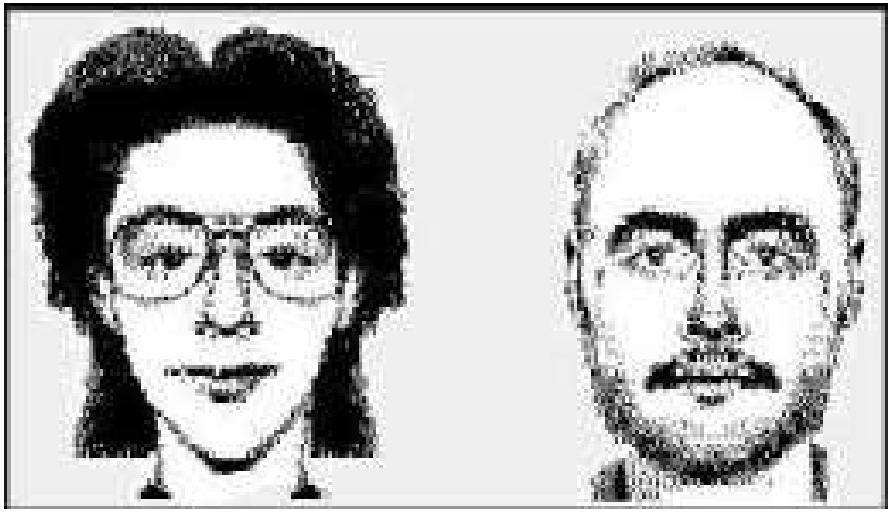
  Assists rapid decision making

- **Push information rapidly through our limited processing system**



Drawbacks of Categorization

- **Limits perceptual world, overlooks key information**
- **Often results in predictable errors**
  - **Some categories oversimplify the specific aspects of the people in them**
  - **People are reluctant to revise categories once established**
- **These errors may lead to stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination**



Gordon Allport: Categorization and Prejudice

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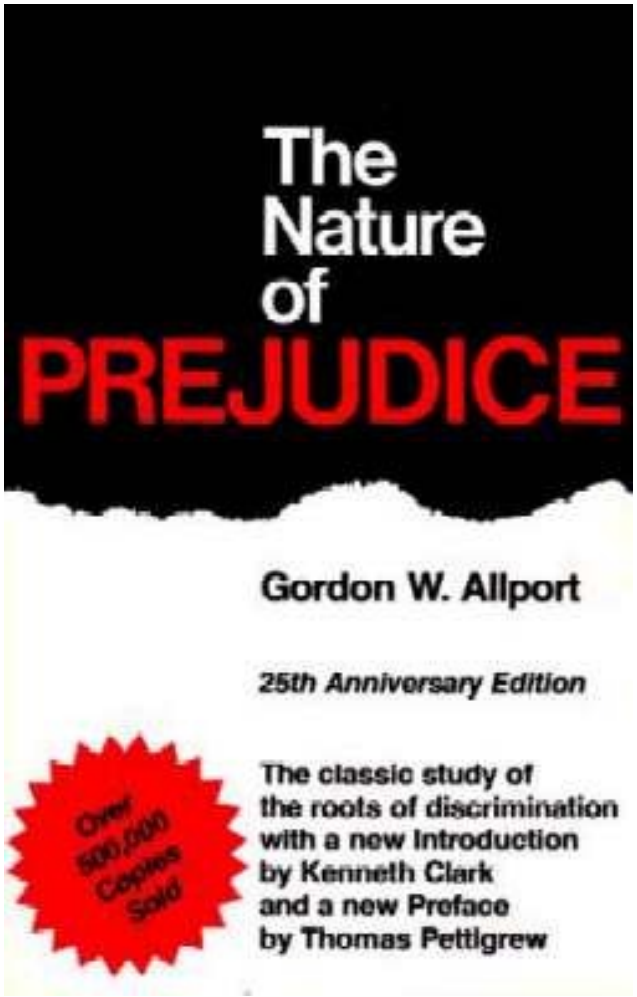
- **First to claim that prejudice, discrimination, and conflict aren't always emotional, irrational, or dysfunctional**
- **Allport: Forming categories is a normal process; People naturally group things into categories on a number of dimensions**
- **Categorization:**

  Inevitable and necessary

  Forms basis for prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination


The Nature of PREJUDICE
Gordon W. Allport
25th Anniversary Edition
Over 500,000 Copies Sold
The classic study of the roots of discrimination with a new Introduction by Kenneth Clark and a new Preface by Thomas Pettigrew

Categorization and Stereotypes

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- **Stereotypes: Generalizations about characteristics of a group**
- **Advantages: Saves time, speeds decision making, saves mental processing**
- **Disadvantages: Often overgeneralized, inaccurate, and resistant to change; usually negative**
- **People cling to negative stereotypes even in the face of disconfirming evidence**
- **Stereotypes don’t allow for individual variation**

Social Categorization

- **People are natural "classifiers"**
  - **Helps us simplify and understand our environment**
- **When the classifications are about people it's called <u>social categorization</u>**
- **Social categorization: Putting people into categories**
  - **Gender, race, personality, appearance, often the basis for social categorization**
    - **Why?**

Can Social Categorization Alone Lead to Discrimination?

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- **Tajfel and Turner (1986):**
  - **People randomly assigned to groups**
  - **Asked to decide how to allocate money in a psychology experiment**
  - **Minimal Groups established: Not face-to-face interaction; identities of members not known; no personal benefit from allocation**
- **Results:**
  - **Bias in favor of the group people belonged to -- the “in-group”**
  - **More money allocated to the “in-group” and less to the “out-group”**

Conclusion: Social Categorization Can Lead to Discrimination

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- **“Mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups, that is social categorization, is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group”**

  Tajfel & Turner, 1986

- **Discussion: Do people always favor in-groups?**

Beyond Categorization: Group Identity Theory

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- **People identify with the social groups that they are in**
- **People evaluate in-group more favorably than out-group**
  - **in-group-out-group bias**
- **Focus on positive features of in-group, ignore negative characteristics**
  - **opposite true for out-group**

In-group/Out-group Bias

- **Categorization into in-group vs out-group is automatic and natural**
- **Once in-group/out-group categorization occurs, bias often follows**
- **In-group Favoritism**

  Members of in-groups usually viewed more favorably
- **Out-group Derogation**

  Formation of the "enemy image"

Out-group Homogeneity - In-group Differentiation

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- **People see members of the out-group as being similar but they tend to see members of their own group as being different**
- **Biased assumption that out-groups are more homogeneous than they really are**

  Evidence: We assume people older than ourselves or of different racial groups are more similar to each other than they really are
- **Maintains stereotypes: "They are all alike"**
- **Increases under conflict**

Discussion: Would Marines and non-Marines view this picture differently?

Summary

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- **<u>Controversial Idea</u>: Origins of prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination can be found in "normal" human information processing**

  Way of simplifying the world and dealing with too much information

- **<u>Important Point</u>: Cognitive approach doesn't mean that prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination are acceptable or can't be changed**

Research Evidence: Robber's Cave

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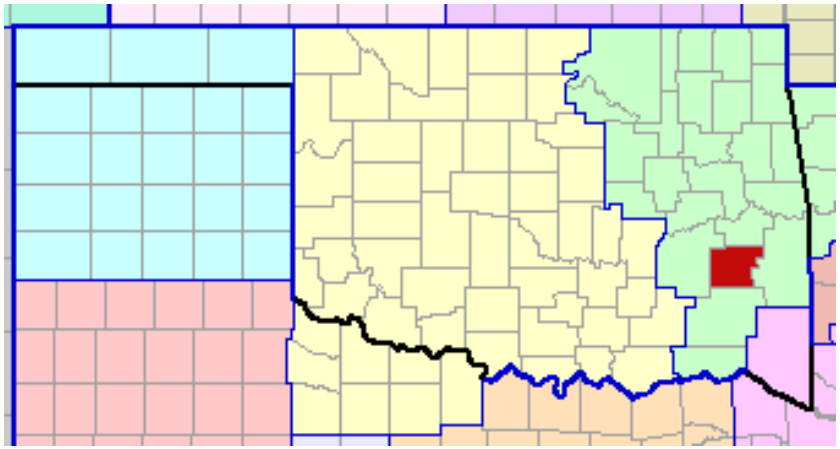
- Field Experiment done in mid-1950s
- 11 year old boys from Oklahoma, well-adjusted, similar backgrounds, didn't know each other
- Took part in group dynamics experiment as part of summer camp
  - Parents knew and approved--children didn't know
- Location: Robber's Cave State Park, Oklahoma
- Two groups created
  - Rattlers
  - Eagles

Robber's Cave
OKLAHOMA



Robber's Cave Experiment: Phase I

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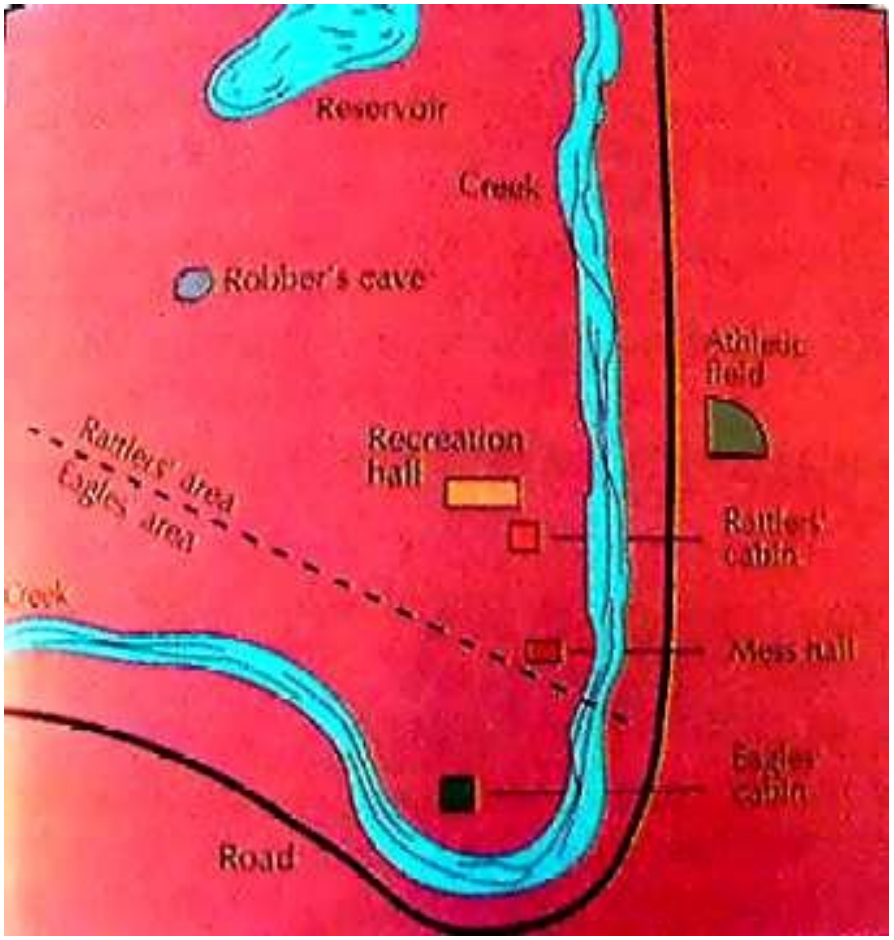
- **Randomly assigned boys to separate groups at summer camp**
- **Placed in separate cabins**
- **Kept apart for a week**
- **Effect of separation**
  - **Boys became strongly attached to their own groups**
  - **"The edge was given to one's own group" even before competition began**
  - **Began referring to others as "they", "those guys", "outsiders"**



Robber's Cave Experiment: Phase II

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- **Competition**

  Groups engaged in series of competitions (softball, tug-of-war)

  Result: Increased verbal hostility, aggression, especially when one group lost

  - **Eagles lost a game, stole Rattler flag**
  - **Rattlers raided Eagle cabin, stole things**
  - **Fights broke out**
  - **Researchers had to intervene to prevent further escalation**

- **Categorization plus competition lead to bias and conflict**

Lessons of Robber's Cave

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- "Us" vs "Them" happened even before they saw each other

  Referred to other group in a negative fashion

- Although competition increased conflict between groups, it was automatically started simply by social categorization

- "Group members reject members of other groups not because they fear them, not because they compete with them, but simply because they belong to a different group"

Occurrence of Prejudice/Discrimination

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- **Surveys of prejudice in the US have shown a decrease since the 1940s**
- **May reflect true decline as well as fact that currently less "socially acceptable" to express prejudice**
- **General agreement that overt prejudice has decreased but that covert forms of prejudice/discrimination still exist**

  Covert prejudice/discrimination: more subtle, indirect

  Harder to measure prejudice/discrimination with surveys; use other measures -- bank loans, car loans

Change in National Attitudes toward Interracial Marriage

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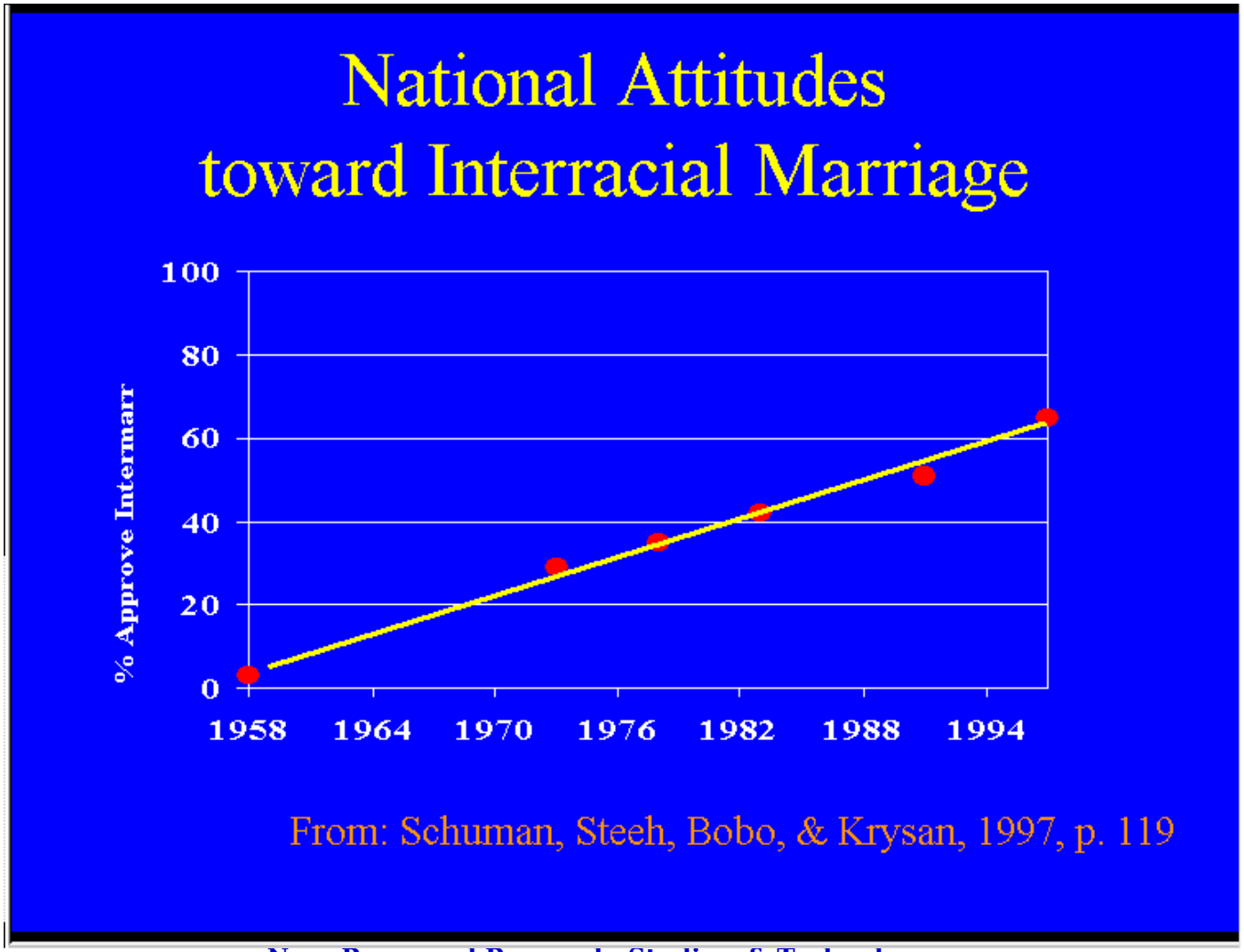

Change in National Attitudes Toward Integrated Neighborhoods

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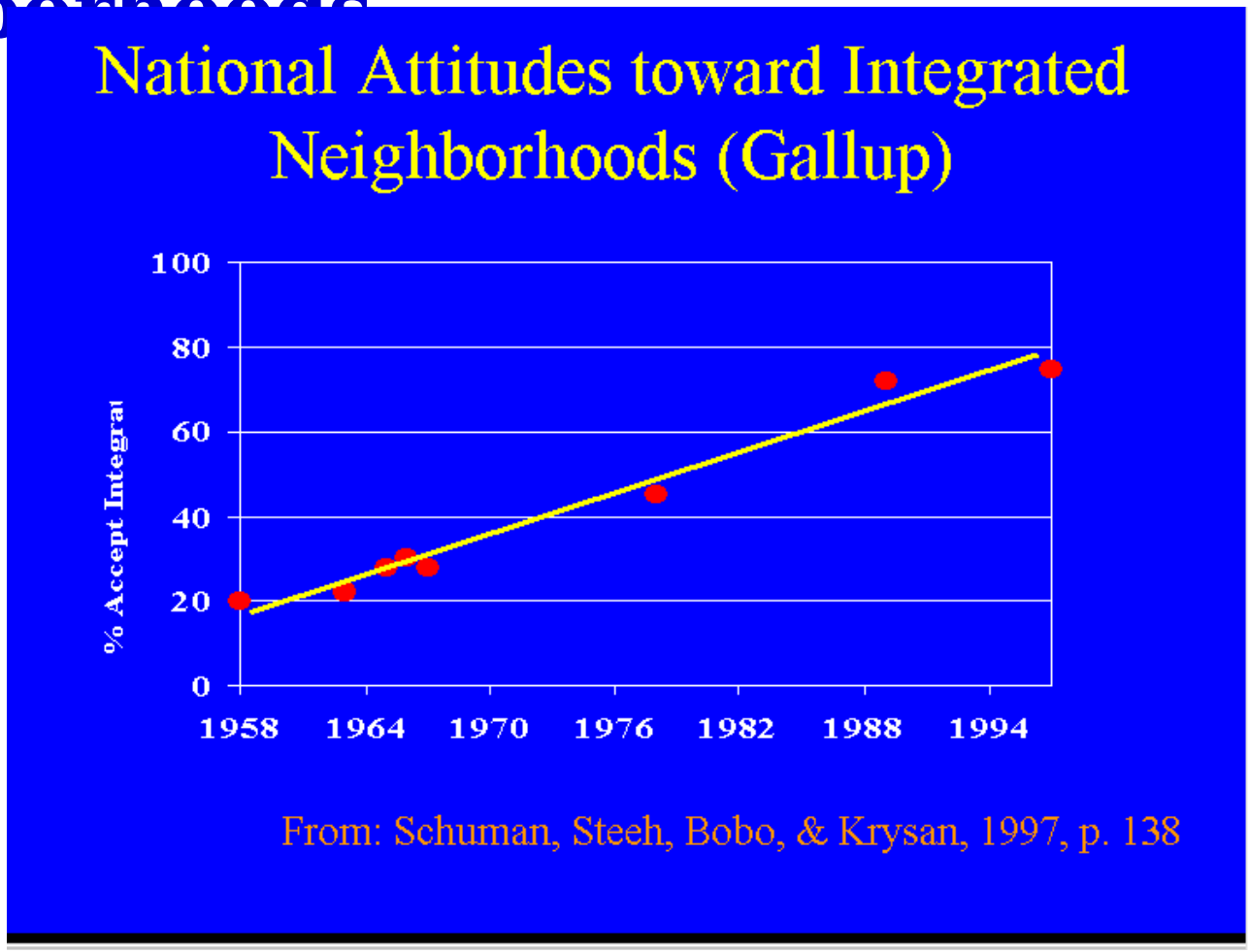

Occurrence of Prejudice/Discrimination

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- **If prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination occur through natural tendency to categorize, why have rates of discrimination on surveys decreased?**

- **Answer may be found in theory of Aversive Racism**

Aversive Racism (Gaertner & Dovidio)

- **Modern expression of prejudice/discrimination more subtle and covert than in past**

  Direct expressions of prejudice/discrimination are not socially acceptable even though feelings still exist

- **Conflicting feelings about race**

  Most people hold egalitarian views--want to appear fair, just, and unprejudiced

  Due to historical cultural and cognitive/motivational biases, people favor their own racial in-group to out-group

  - **May hold negative feelings towards other racial groups that they are unaware of or don't acknowledge**

  Mixed feelings about race are expressed indirectly or symbolically depending on the situation

Aversive Racism

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- **People are not likely to discriminate when:**

  Norms for non-prejudiced behavior exist

- **People are more likely to discriminate when:**

  Norms for appropriate behavior are weak or unclear

  A justification is available

- **Conclusion: Prejudice and discrimination are more likely when it can be made to appear that it is something else**

Aversive Racism – Empirical Evidence

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- **Study on emergency situations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1977)**

  White participants in situation where white or black person needs help in an emergency

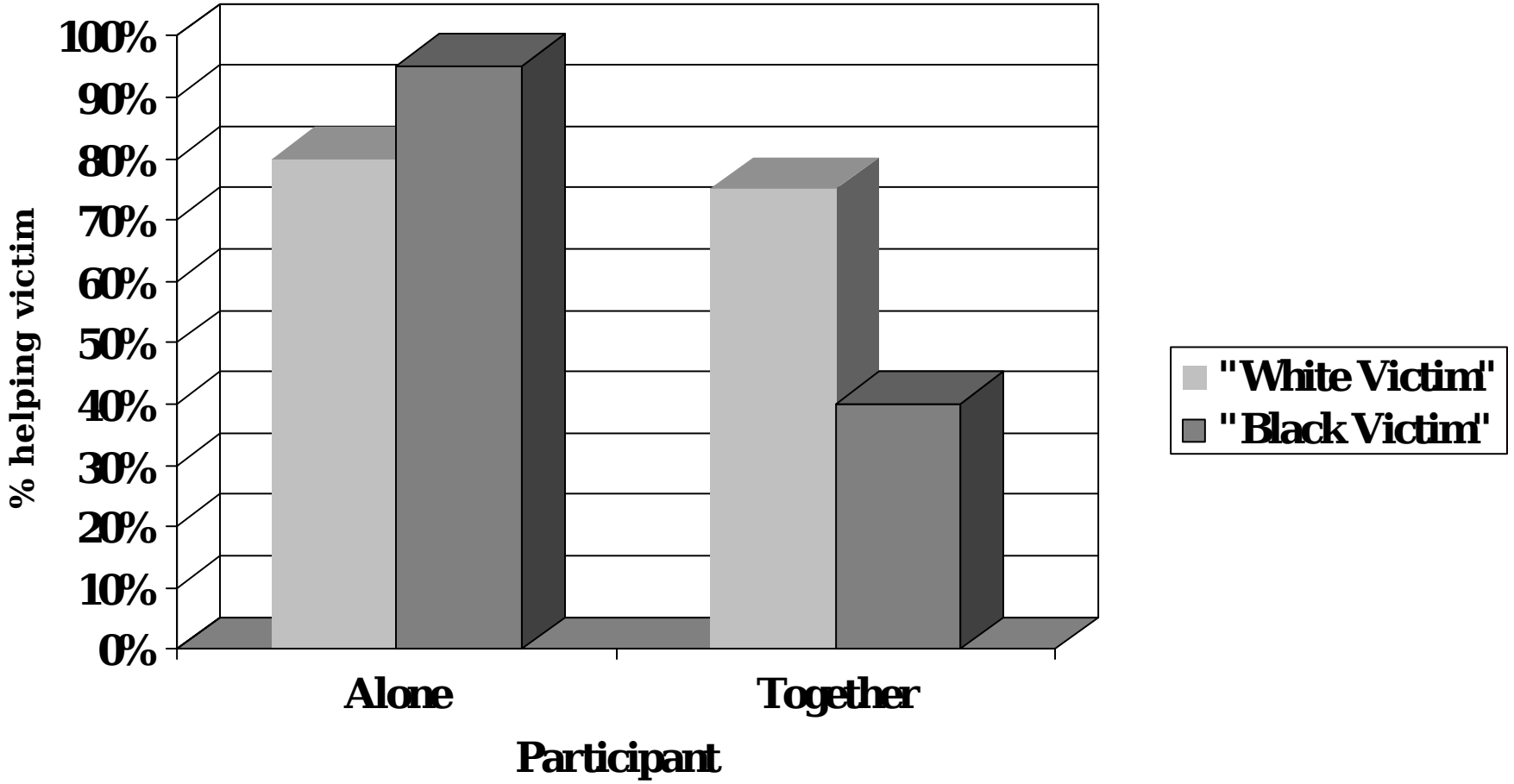
  - **Two conditions:**
    - **Participant Alone: the only witness to the emergency**
    - **Participant Together: is one in a group of three witnesses to the emergency**

  Alone - equally likely to help white or black person

  Others present - more likely to help white person than black person

  Why?

Helping in Emergency Situations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1977)



Aversive Racism

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- **Recent research studies (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Sears, van Laar, Carillo & Kosterman, 1997) have found similar results**
- **How does Aversive Racism theory explain positive survey findings on racial attitudes?**

  Norms for racial tolerance have changed over time; expressing negative opinions based on race would clearly violate the current racial climate

  But prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination still exist
- **What can be done to reduce prejudice and discrimination?**

Reducing Prejudice/Discrimination

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- **Contact Hypothesis: Increase direct contact between antagonistic groups**
- **Decategorization: Try to reduce in-group/out-group bias by breaking down group barriers**
- **Recategorization: Try to induce two groups to see themselves as a single more inclusive group**

Contact Hypothesis

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- **Contact between antagonistic groups supposed to reduce bias**

  More contact = More accurate perceptions of the out-group

- **Research: Simple contact not enough**

  Robber's Cave: When Rattlers and Eagles simply did things together--eat, games-- antagonisms still remained

- **Conclusion: Contact alone not enough; "Contact Plus" needed**

Sherif: "Far from reducing conflict these situations serve as occasions for the rival groups to berate and attack each other"

Contact Plus

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- **Contact plus superordinate goals works to reduce conflict**
- **Robber's Cave: Staged crises; boys had to work together to fix broken water pipe; move a broken truck**

  Result: After a week conflict reduced

  Conclusion: Superordinate goal (e.g., emergencies) forced groups to work together cooperatively and reduced conflict

Robber's Cave: Cooperative Contact Plus Superordinate Goals

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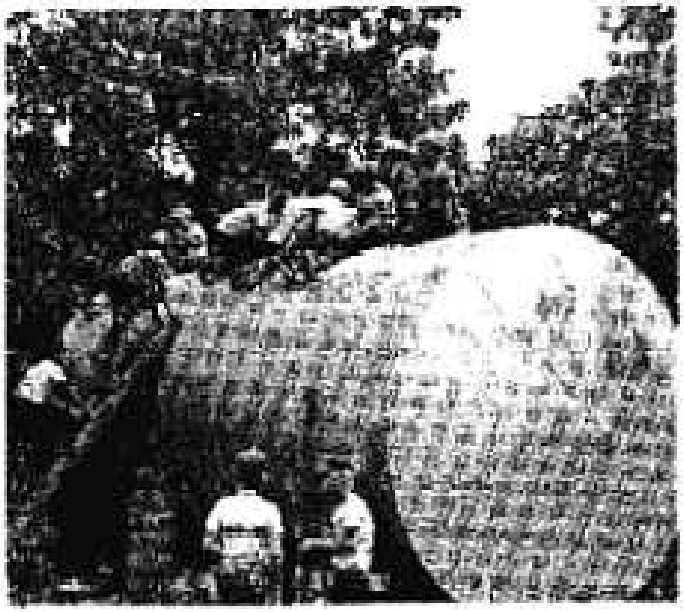
(Below) Intergroup interaction after the introduction of superordinate goals.



Members of both groups climb up to see if the water tank is empty.

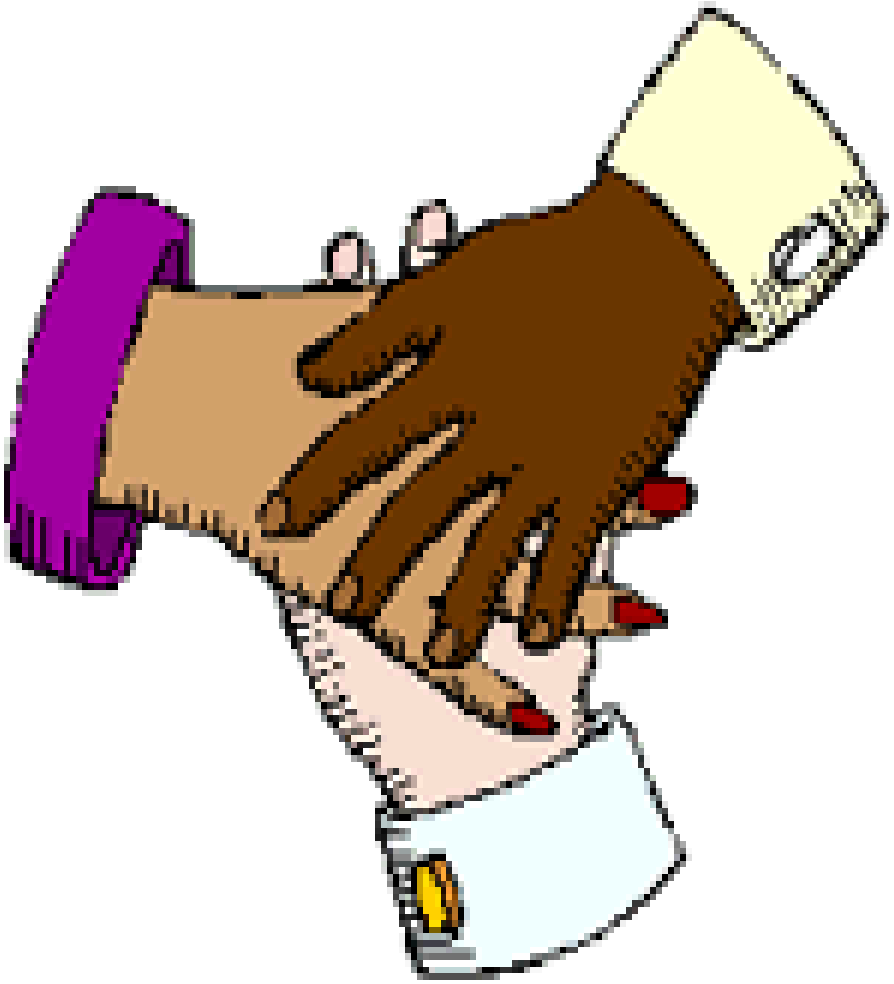
Members of both groups cluster around and take turns trying to clear the faucet.

Contact Plus: What Else Works

- ✔ **Support by authorities (teachers, role models)**
- ✔ **Cooperative rather than competitive goals**
- ✔ **Informal rather than formal**
- ✔ **Contact is individualized**
- ✔ **Equal status in the situation**
- ✔ **Positive outcomes**
- ✔ **Repeated contact -- high "acquaintance potential"**

Decategorization

- **Reduce bias by breaking down group barriers**
  - **Make out-group members into individuals**
  - **Stress individuality of all group members**
  - **Make memberships in other common groups known (cross-categorization)**
  - **Social events**
  - **Information sharing -- more alike than different**
  - **Form the common in-group**



Recategorization

- **Merge groups; shift boundaries**
  - **Reduce bias by making 2 groups into 1**
  - **Making "outsiders" into "insiders" reduces prejudice**
- **Change "us" and "them" into "we"**
- **Develop "Common In-group Identity"**
  - **Larger more inclusive**
  - **Takes advantage of favoritism for the new in-group**
- **Common enemy approach**
  - **Sherif: Softball game against other camp reduced in-group out-group bias**

Conclusions

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- **Evolutionary, personality, social learning, and cognitive/group identity theories offered by psychologists to explain prejudice and discrimination**

  Many different explanations; all have some validity

- **Cognitive theory focuses on natural tendency to categorize**

  Leads to prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination

  In-group/out-group bias

- **Aversive racism may explain why expressions of bias have decreased while biased feelings still exist**

Conclusions (cont'd)

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- **Conflict can be resolved or reduced (contact, decategorization, recategorization) but it is difficult**

  Robber's Cave: Six days of cooperation plus superordinate goals had wiped out most of the conflict

  When time to go back to Oklahoma City, some from different groups wanted to go back on same bus

  "When they asked if this might be done, and received an affirmative answer from the staff, some of them actually cheered. When the bus pulled out the seating arrangement did not follow group lines. Many boys looked back at the camp and cried because camp was over".

Selected References

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